

ETHAN'S STORY



Let us introduce ourselves – we are the Campbells. Mark is Ethan's wonderful Dad, Luke is his big brother and THE best big brother anyone could want and I am his Mum, Michelle.

We joined the Mater Dei Community six years ago when Ethan started Year 5. Over the years we have watched Ethan grow into an incredible young man with the support and love from our family and also the support and guidance of the Mater Dei staff.

If we go back to that day when Ethan's diagnosis of Down Syndrome was stated, we were initially in shock but we had bigger problems to address with Ethan's immediate health problems including heart defects and respiratory issues that were threatening his little life. Once these health issues were dealt with we faced the DS diagnosis head on! Early Intervention was started at four weeks with fortnightly Speech Pathology, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy and so the routine continued till Ethan started School.

Ethan soon became a master at everything and stole A LOT of hearts. We started our school years mainstreaming at Camden South Public School and had an amazing six years where wonderful skills were developed and friendships were formed that have followed us till this day. But the dreaded high school decision loomed and needed to be made and Mater Dei was our first and only choice. We were blessed to receive a position to start in Year 5 and we have never looked back.

We started at Mater Dei the same year the new building began and our Principal, Tony Fitzgerald, started. We have watched the School grow and I feel we have grown with it. It truly has turned into a beautiful School and we feel very proud to be a part of it. Ethan has enjoyed being in the School Choir for the

last five years and enjoyed singing at the School events each year. The Performing Arts Night is a particular favourite of ours as it showcases the wonderful talents of all the students.

Ethan is just about to finish Year 10 and is very much looking forward to Structured Work Placement next year. He has been a part of the Living Skills Program since he started Year 7, at first for one night each week (this was to allow Dad to adjust) and then he graduated to two nights per week. The LSP has been an invaluable part of Ethan's growth and also our family life. It enables me to work and it also allows Mark and I to have 'a date night'.

Ethan has learnt so many life skills in the program which gives us confidence that he will carry those skills into his adult life and be a part of his community. We cannot praise Pamela and all the Social Educators in the LSP enough. They have been supportive and encouraging in all our decisions in regards to Ethan and we encourage all parents to take advantage of the Living Skills Program.

Ethan has a dream like any other 17 year old, to get a job and have his independence and we, his family, along with the support of the Mater Dei Community, will encourage that dream.

Ethan is an amazing young man and we are so very proud of his achievements. We only have two years to go until our years at Mater Dei are over. The future is uncertain in many ways but we are sure that all will be fine with the continued support and guidance of Mater Dei, the love of our family and friends and the will and determination of Ethan.

Michelle Campbell